

~~SECRET~~
INFORMATION REPORT

COUNTRY Syria/Spain

DATE DISTR. ¹⁸ August 1948SUBJECT Proposed Expansion of the
Syrian Air Force

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1. Upon orders from President Quwwatli of Syria, the Syrian Ministry of Defense has set up a special commission to raise thirty-two million Syrian pounds with which to buy four hundred aircraft of various types. Soliciting offices are soon to be set up in all parts of Syria, and contribution goals are to be assigned to various parts of the country, in accordance with the number of aircraft to be stationed in those areas.

2. Specifically, the following areas of Syria are to contribute funds for the listed number of aircraft:

Damascus	100 aircraft
Aleppo	100 aircraft
Homs-Hama	50 aircraft
Kamishle	50 aircraft
The Jazirah	100 aircraft

3. A second report states that early in July President Quwwatli summoned five wealthy merchants in Damascus who own the United Commercial Corporation (a textile combine) and told them that he needed their help in raising six million Syrian pounds with which to buy one hundred aircraft for the Syrian air force. Quwwatli told the businessmen that they were the ones who would lose most from continued Jewish air raids in the area and that they should, therefore, shoulder a large part of the financial burden. The businessmen immediately agreed to make a large donation to the cause and to "solicit" from their workers a still larger fund. They stated, however, that six million pounds was too great an amount to donate and suggested that the government attempt to raise the money through other sources as well.

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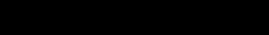


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4.  these five men, as well as other Syrian industrialists, have been greatly disturbed over the possibility of increased Jewish air raids on Damascus and vicinity. They think that President Quwwatli's demand for six million pounds was a hidden warning to them not to start defeatist talk with regard to the Palestine situation, as well as a reminder that ~~25X1X6~~ continued support was relied on by the government.
5.  states that, while Syrian Government officials are planning on this scheme with apparent sincerity, no one concerned seriously thinks that the government has a chance to raise funds for even a fraction of the number of planes envisaged in this plan. Source feels that President Quwwatli suggested such a ridiculously high number of planes because he felt that it would serve as a shock treatment to the dwindling enthusiasm in Syria for contributing funds to the war effort.
6. Jean Bey Sihmawi, a Damascus businessman who is the honorary Spanish Consul in Damascus, has already opened negotiations with a Spanish firm to furnish the planes for the Syrian air force. ~~25X1A6a~~  Comment. Jean Bey Sihmawi is said to be a friend of the wealthy and influential Spanish industrialist, Juan March, and to have several other influential Spanish friends.)

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